

CASE STUDY:

INTEGRATED PLANNING ALONG EUROPEAN COASTS Severn Estuary

ABSTRACT:

In order for ICZM planning and implementation to be successful, the following key factors should be taken into account: political will, sense of urgency, funding, partnerships and full stakeholder involvement. The Severn Estuary Partnership provides an ICZM planning structure in the region.

LOCATION:

Severn Estuary, United Kingdom

KEYWORDS:

Governance, Stakeholder and Public Participation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Severn is one of the largest estuaries in Britain with the second highest tidal range in the world. There was a strong need for coordination and balance in the estuary region and therefore the Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) was set up by local authorities and several other stakeholders. Such partnership ensures full stakeholder involvement from the beginning and results in a well-coordinated group of actors with high awareness about estuary issues. Political will, a sense of urgency, adequate funding, full stakeholder involvement and such non-statutory partnerships like the SEP maintain good planning and managing practises in the region which can be an example for other coastal regions.

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Description of the coastal zone

The Severn is the second largest estuary in Britain. It is located on the west coast and includes an area of 557 km² with an intertidal area of 100 km². When one takes into account the Bristol Channel, the largest and most important British sand marsh is located in the Severn. A major and unique challenge in the area is the high tidal range, the second highest in the world. The estuary supports more than 80 species of fish, more than any other British estuary. The Estuary is known to be a centre of human activity, a food source, a source of water and raw materials. Major cities, such as Bristol, Cardiff and Gloucester are supported by the Estuary and it is also a port to the Atlantic. About 3 million people live within 25 miles of the mouth of the Severn.



Key factors in the success of ICZM planning and implementation

i) Political will

Political will concerning coastal management in the UK originated in the Town and Country Planning Act (1990), which defines 'a narrow role for planning in the coastal zone as it is concerned solely with the development and use of land'¹ which therefore leaves other matters concerning the coastal zone out. In Poole, Dorset in 1991 there was a European Workshop on Coastal Zone Management which emphasized that each European coastal nation should have a strategy concerning its coastal zone, involving local, regional, national and international action. Coastal planning and management in the UK is of course subject to EU directives and regulations, besides that the major actors in the process are local.

There is a lack of national or even regional policy or strategy concerning ICZM. This doesn't mean that there is little political will in the UK and therefore in the Severn Estuary. Many statutory and some non-statutory instruments cover the coastal zone and overlap one another. So, there is certainly political will present to implement ICZM in the Severn Estuary. Political will is stimulated by the European Union with the "think global, act local" motto. In order to preserve the dynamic Severn Estuary many initiatives take place in the area.

The Severn is internationally recognized for nature conservation and one can not deny that much is done to manage the area. Because of the high tidal ranges and the fact that many industries and people are settled in the area there is obviously a strong need for political involvement. Many have had an interest in the estuary, but it was the Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP) that provided the maze of the different organisations with some structure. Besides structure the SEP implements the Severn Estuary Strategy. This very important initiative was set up in 1995 by local authorities, the Environment agency and countryside agencies. Joint planning programme: Severn Estuary Strategy and the Severn Local Environment Agency Plan. This programme shows the benefits of collaboration; increased efficiency and consistency. There was a need for balance between economic, social and environmental interests.

¹ Department of the Environment (1993) *Coastal Planning and Management: A Review*. Report: Review of Planning Policy for the Coast and Earth Science Information in Support of Coastal Planning and Management. Rendel Geotechnics, London. pp. 15-23

The Severn Estuary is subject to the EC Habitats Directive, which is in short an agreed international action for nature conservation that promotes the sustainable use of an area.

ii) Sense of Urgency

First of all, before the SEP was set up there was a strong need for coordination and balance in the estuary. The Severn Estuary includes the boundary between Wales and South West England and therefore different agencies and regional organisations are present in the area. The sometimes parallel agencies and different systems of operating call for coordination and cooperation.

Besides that, the one factor that makes the Severn Estuary so unique is also an issue that calls for good planning and management in the coastal zone. The high tidal ranges are a challenge for coastal defence and ICZM in the area.

iii) Funding

Available funding is of course important in implementing ICZM strategy in the Severn Estuary. Funding in the area consists of EU funding, local funding and funding by different organisations. In the past years the Severn Estuary has become part of some major EU projects.

In 2004 the EU-funded project COREPOINT came into being. This is a 4.2 million project with 12 parties from different countries including the UK. This project promotes the development and implementation of ICZM across North West Europe and therefore also the Severn Estuary.

The CoastAtlantic program started in 2003 and also includes a wide range of partners. The final goal of the project is to develop a common vision on ICZM strategy in the Atlantic area. The SEP is one of the theme leaders and is an expert on for example stakeholder involvement and urban/rural interdependencies.

The Severn Estuary Partnership is funded by local authorities, the Environment Agency, countryside agencies and other organisations.

iv) The development of non-statutory partnerships



One important initiative is the Severn Estuary Partnership (SEP), that was set up in 1995 by local authorities, the Environment agency and countryside agencies. The aim of the partnership is to bring all stakeholders together to encourage communication and cooperation on wise use of the estuary. Parties in the SEP include local authorities, port and harbour authorities, national agencies, internationally important industries and many voluntary bodies and community groups.

Actors in the Severn Estuary understand the need for partnerships. The Severn Estuary Partnership Forum is an initiative which all those with an interest in the estuary are encouraged to take part annually. In January 2003, a memorandum of understanding was signed by the Partnership and other organisations in order to acknowledge the importance of cooperation during the development and implementation of plans and projects which affect the estuary.

v) Full stakeholder involvement from the beginning

Stakeholder involvement in the Severn Estuary is an excellent example for other ICZM partnerships and projects. Stakeholder involvement is well coordinated (one of the main aims of the SEP) and stakeholders are very aware of their role in the process. This also has do to with the way the United Kingdom encourages and values public participation.

The main stakeholders in the Severn Estuary and parties to of the SEP are of course the SEP itself, the Association of Severn Estuary Authorities, the Bristol Channel Counter Pollution Association, the Severn Estuary Coastal Group and the Standing Conference of Severnside Local Authorities. These actors are also parties to the Memorandum of Understanding.

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